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CHILDREN NEED VACCINES TO START SCHOOL ***School-readiness must include immunizations***

JACKSONVILLE, FL Due to local and national responses to COVID-19, many parents have had decreased access to child health practices or have chosen to defer routine child health care, including immunizations. As a result, immunization coverage for children has decreased to concerning levels, in particular for Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR), which are required for pre-school and Kindergarten entry, and Tetanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis (Tdap), which is required for 7th grade entry. We are currently at risk for a Measles epidemic, as well as increasing cases of Whooping Cough (Pertussis) and other vaccine preventable diseases.

This past Monday, Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran ordered public schools to reopen in August. At the current rate of child and youth immunizations completed in Duval County, this mandate could present a significant problem for children and their families if they have not received their current immunizations including MMR and Tdap shots, because it would negate the child's ability to start the new school year.

"Children need to be fully prepared for school which includes a health and wellness check up with immunizations that vary depending on a child's age," said Jeff Goldhagen, MD, Medical Director, Partnership for Child Health and The Players Center at Wolfson Children's Hospital. "With the Commissioner's mandate, Northeast Florida pediatricians, in concert with the Florida Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Northeast Florida Pediatric Society and Florida Department of Health in Duval County are strongly encouraging all families to schedule a wellness check up to include immunizations as soon as possible."

To facilitate families' access to immunizations, the Florida Department of Health in Duval County and AGAPE Community Health Center are offering physicals and immunizations between now and August 8th to prepare children and families for the school year. Please refer to the attached flyer for locations, dates and times.

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The Partnership for Child Health is a decades old non-profit organization committed to the development of integrated systems of care that advance the health and well-being of children. The Partnership works through collaborative alliances to transform the medical, mental, behavioral and developmental health systems for children, youth and families—connecting them with the resources and services they need to reach their full potential. For more information visit www.partnershipforchildhealth.org.

Wolfson Children's Hospital in Jacksonville, Florida, is a part of Baptist Health, Northeast Florida's most comprehensive health system serving every stage of life. Wolfson Children's is the only children's hospital in Northeast Florida and serves as the pediatric referral center for North Florida, South Georgia and beyond. Staffed 24/10 by pediatric nurses and other healthcare professionals specially trained to work with children, the 216-bed, patient- and family-centered hospital features the latest pediatric medical technology in a welcoming, child-friendly environment.

The Northeast Florida Pediatric Society at www.nefps.org, is a society for practitioners dedicated to the health care of children in Northeast Florida.